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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

SEPTEMBER 1-4, 2026 • SAPIENZA UNIVERSITY OF ROME, ITALY

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schools offers real opportunities to experiment with new pedagogical and architectural approaches. Permeability, flexibility and territorial integration become fundamental tools. Opening, welcoming, transforming: the school becomes an educational and civic hub, where learning is community and the community itself becomes school.

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EXPLORING FUTURES THROUGH TERRITORY: EDUCATION OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM AS PEDAGOGICAL LEVERAGE FOR LIFELONG ORIENTATION

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Education Outside the Classroom

Lifelong Orientation

Rural Schools

International and national frameworks increasingly conceptualize schools as democratic learning ecosystems capable of integrating educational, social, and territorial resources (OECD, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). Within this vision, schools are called to act as community-embedded learning environments that support students' development throughout their educational pathway. In Italy, the *Linee guida per l'orientamento* (MIM, 2022) recognise orientation as a continuous educational process of self-construction, beginning in early childhood, aimed at fostering self-awareness, confidence, and recognition of individual interests and potential across all levels of education. This paper explores how Education Outside the Classroom (EoTC) (Lauterbach, Bølling & Dettweiler, 2023), informed by Early Career Education perspectives (Del Gobbo, Frison & Galeotti, 2021) can function as a pedagogical leverage for lifelong orientation, enabling exploratory encounters with the world of work and supporting students' reflection on possible futures. In this framework, early career education is viewed as a series of educational activities that, while connected to the school curriculum, extend beyond the classroom through territory-based exploration. This broadens students' understanding of opportunities, interests, and personal aspirations, supporting self-exploration and identity development rather than prescribing vocational choices. The study was conducted in a rural comprehensive institute located in a mountain area of Northern Italy, involving selected classes from kindergarten, primary, and lower secondary school (N = 87 students). The research adopted a participatory action-research design and all classes participated in a locally-rooted orientation project, combining community exploration with classroom-based reflective activities. This was designed to foster a vertically coherent approach across educational levels. The local territory — civic institutions, local enterprises, and cultural heritage sites — functioned as an extended classroom (Frabboni, 1980), offering students authentic encounters with work-related practices and local professions. Within this broader framework, a *ricerca-formazione* pathway (Asquini, 2018) was carried out with primary school teachers, resulting in the co-design and implementation of a four-day immersive EoTC experience involving two primary school classes. During this process, research questions and educational objectives were collaboratively defined with the teaching team. Data collection combined qualitative and quantitative tools including teachers' and students' logbooks, field notes, interviews and pre- and post-experience questionnaires with both participating and control classes (Trinchero, 2002). Logbooks supported the iterative redesign of activities and formative evaluation. Reflective sessions facilitated by the researcher explicitly linked EoTC experiences to themes of self-awareness, interest exploration, and future orientation in a lifelong perspective. Preliminary findings suggest that structured EoTC experiences foster meaningful contact with professional practices and stimulate students' reflection on their personal interests, competencies and aspirations. At the institutional level, the *ricerca-formazione* process enhanced teachers' professional reflexivity regarding their orienting role and contributed to envisioning a shared vertical orientation curriculum. This paper argues that territory-based educational experiences can function as a pedagogical infrastructure for lifelong orientation in rural contexts in particular, positioning schools as relational hubs that connect learning, community resources, and students' exploration of possible futures.

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ROOTS AND PERMEABLE BOUNDARIES: THE 0–6 INTEGRATED SYSTEM BETWEEN COMMUNITY, SPACE, AND EDUCATIONAL CONTINUITY

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ECEC

Community Hub

Whole School Approach

The educational provision of early childhood services (0–3) and preschools has long drawn on the spaces immediately surrounding educational settings as fundamental mediators of children's experience. Through the exploration of the local environment, educators and teachers support the acquisition of everyday competencies and knowledge, reconfiguring children's experiences within a structured horizon of meaning. Every space — corridors, threshold environments, shared areas, classrooms, courtyards and gardens within the service; streets, squares, shops and public parks beyond its walls — becomes an educational imprint within diversified, complex, and interrelated experiences (Bertolino & Guerra, 2021). The establishment of the integrated system of education and care, designed to guarantee "all children, from birth to six years of age, equal opportunities to develop their potential for relationships, autonomy, creativity, and learning, in order to overcome inequalities and territorial, economic, ethnic, and cultural barriers" (Legislative Decree 65/2017), both affirms and radicalises this vision. The 0–6 Integrated System constitutes an educational continuum accompanying the child from birth to six years through an articulated network of services — from nurseries and micro-nurseries to spring sections, from supplementary services to state and accredited preschools — conceived in close interconnection with one another and with the wider community context. The system's core innovation lies in the Childhood Hubs (Poli per l'infanzia): shared spaces in which the 0–3 and 3–6 segments coexist, fostering educational continuity and the construction of a community of care and learning that brings together children, families, and educators within a shared project (Rosa, 2025). The theoretical framework of this contribution integrates three complementary perspectives. The first is that of the Extended School (Scuola Estesa), which interprets educational continuity both vertically — between nursery and preschool — and horizontally (Mangione et al., 2025), between institution and territory, maximising local pedagogical traditions and transforming the integrated system into a permanent cultural resource for the entire community. The second is that of the Community Hub, which reframes 0–6 services as vital centres capable of generating social cohesion and connecting families, services, and local resources. The third is that of the Whole School Approach, a holistic strategy that engages all members of the educational community — staff, children, families, and the wider territory — in the shared construction of genuinely collaborative, supportive, and inclusive environments (Rosa, 2024). The forms through which the integrated 0–6 system may be concretely configured are multiple, offering responses calibrated to the traditions, specificities, and needs of individual territories. The Puglia Region has in this respect developed a range of strategies that have been the subject of INDIRE research through case study methodology. The findings make it possible to identify models in which preschool educational provision takes shape as centres of social aggregation and learning ecosystems situated at the intersection of architecture, urban planning, and pedagogy, offering transferable insights for the development of territorial educational policy.

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